

The Lun Bawang Bamboo Band Ensemble

by

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The Lun Bawang bamboo band which is known by its dialect as *lun ngiup suling & ngiup bas* is a unique trademark of the Sarawak Lun Bawang community. It is widely played among the community today during festivals and special occasions in church. Since, this bamboo ensemble is always regarded as the musical icon of the community, the question here is whether the bamboo band originated from the Lun Bawang community. Is it really a traditional musical instrument solely own by the Lun Bawang people? This article aims to trace the origin of the Bamboo Band, its physical aspects in terms of the musical instruments, its repertoire, functions and current status of the ensemble in today's society.

Introduction

The bamboo band consists of a minimum of 36 members with at least 15 flute (*suling*) players, 20 *bas* players and 1 bass drummer. The *suling*, the transverse flute is an aerophone. It is commonly referred to as wind instrument as it produces sound by means of vibrating column of air blown in and circulated within the hollow tube of the instrument. The *suling* only played by the ladies. The *bas*, an aerophone instrument. The *bas* is only played by men. It is made of two parallel bamboo tubes connected by two short thin bamboo at right angle. The *tubong*, which is the bass drum serves as the time keeper; playing each and every beat of the song. It is classified as the membranophone instrument and is also played only by men.